

Zagori  
Greece EH1

## LAWYERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS 239

permission to burn off grass, appeals against the various restrictions on grazing in forest areas, advice about animal disease, and free distribution of sprays to combat insect pests fall within this official's competence. But in these and other questions a shepherd is often referred to the provincial office at Jannina, or in winter at Igoumenitsa, Arta, and Preveza. The Greek police, a paramilitary organization, have a central station under the command of a captain in the capital village of each local district, but sections of police are also stationed in outlying areas of the district, each section serving three or four villages. It frequently happens that Sarakatsani are late in the payment of their grazing dues. Although these are assessed by the village, they are paid to the public treasury in the provincial centre. When the police are informed by the treasury that a payment has not been made, they must attempt to serve a demand notice. If payment is again withheld, the debtor is taken under escort to the public treasury and, if he is still unable to pay, from there to prison. But the circumstance that these demands for payment must be served on one individual in person, and not merely to his home or a member of his family, results in a perpetual pantomime of hide-and-seek between police and heads of shepherd families. This causes irritation and bad feeling on both sides. It is a common experience to find a man secreted under a blanket in the darker corner of a kinsman's hut when it is known that police are in the village.

Sarakatsani are sometimes involved in difficulties with the military authorities over conscription. A family with only one son, a physically handicapped father, and without sufficient resources to hire a shepherd, may submit a case for the postponement or abbreviation of the son's term of military service before a committee of appeal. This committee, however, is not thought to be very liberal in its decisions.

The Sarakatsani face the jurisdiction of the State in their frequent adventures in courts of law.<sup>5</sup> The laws that concern the Sarakatsani in their daily life do not generally favour them. The interests of shepherds tend to be opposed to those of peasants or townsmen. For instance, there are many civil suits between owners of private properties and Sarakatsani who claim

<sup>5</sup> I am not considering here the many cases of animal trespass which are heard in local agricultural courts.

585 groom, flanked by his comrades, came to claim the bride and lead the first dance. She was reft from her shadows, conducted downstairs and out under the trees as the sun set at the end of the valley.

585 Her husband conducted her through an extremely formal *syrtos*, followed by a *kalamatiano*, each taking alternate places at the head of a dozen guests strung out, with linked hands, in a crescent. Neither looked at the other, and there was a distinct hint of constraint in the air — no wonder, since, though they came from neighboring summer pastures, it was quite likely they had never met before. Their marriage was as free of private choice as a medieval dynastic alliance between a Wittelsbach and a Hohenstaufen.

585 It is hard not to wonder about the early phases of primitive marriages all over Greece; the shuddering apprehension which must prevail on the one hand and the unmanly strangeness on the other. Till very recently, in the Mani, so inhibiting was the shyness of newly wed strangers that a sword was placed under their pillow in the hopes that it might symbolically sunder this knot of constraint in one Gordian slash. These handicaps must have been made all the more debilitating, in former times, by gloomy preoccupations with the previous inviolacy of the bride, and the long vigil of the guests outside the nuptial dwelling till the groom's mother could blazon forth the all-clear in red on white — to an outburst of salvos and of rustic epithalamiums — on a gory sheet or a shift. In these strict and moral societies, such proofs were surely redundant; but I have heard of Cretan bridegrooms — convinced, and probably baselessly, that others have been beforehand with them — repudiating their brides and unloosing, as though in compensation, unstanachable bloodshed between families. And what about the poor bridegroom? Would the flood tide of wine swirl him triumphantly through all obstacles, or unmask him amidships? No wonder they looked shy.

● 584 Young Sarakatsanis now do their military service like the rest of Greeks and no doubt head for the lanes on the outskirts of garrison towns on mating forays with their fellow recruits. But formerly, living in a ferociously chaste society, they approached wedlock unarmed by all but theory, hearsay, and rule of thumb.

585 HER two dances over, the bride withdrew to her chamber, and more general dancing began. It was uncomplicated, formal, and correct. Plenty of the younger Sarakatsanis were well on in wine and had been so for days, but their dash and high spirits deserted them the moment they joined the

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